

VAEIRA (EXODUS 6:2-9:35)

Frog Beaters

2006 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Sometimes smart people do things that aren't so smart.

Pharaoh ignored G-d's' warning that the Nile would turn to blood if he refused to release the Israelite slaves. He soon saw the folly of ignoring that warning. Next came the warning of the second plague:

"If you refuse to send them out, I will strike your entire boundary with frogs. The river will swarm with frogs, and they will ascend and come into your palace and your bedroom and your bed; and into the house of your servants and of your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls..." (Exodus, 7:27-28)

Pharaoh didn't listen. So Moses put his brother to work:

Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frog ascended and covered the Land of Egypt. (Ibid, verse 2)

Note the singular terminology: "... *the frog ascended.*" Our Sages tell us that the Plague of Frogs was a compound miracle. The swarms of frogs started out with one big frog. The Egyptians tried to kill it. Every time they hit a frog, it produced more frogs. Soon the entire country was inundated with frogs.

Now let me ask you a simple question. If a big frog walked into your house, you might try to kill it. That I understand. But tell me, if every time you hit it, it produced more frogs, what would you immediately stop doing?

If the Egyptians saw that their efforts to get rid of the frogs were backfiring, why did they keep hitting the frogs?!

The fact is that the Pharaoh and his people weren't thinking straight. Had they been thinking logically, they would not have waited for ten plagues to devastate their country before releasing the slaves. Yet, plague after plague, they kept shooting themselves in the feet, bringing more and more destruction upon themselves.

The greater the plague, the bigger the miracle. By unleashing His miraculous fury against Egypt, G-d demonstrated his love for the People of Israel. G-d allowed the Pharaoh, who was, presumably, an intelligent man, to act in such an unintelligent fashion so the world could see the power of our Creator.

Yes, sometimes smart people do things that aren't so smart.

How does a President who wisely refuses to negotiate with terrorists pressure an ally to negotiate with terrorists?

How does an Israeli government set up settlements to serve as a buffer against enemy incursions, only to force the residents out of those settlements, providing new bases for enemy incursions? How does that government talk about giving away even more land to a group of people who celebrate abandonment of settlements as proof that terrorism works? How does that government allow elections in Jerusalem, with candidates on the ballot who call for the destruction of Israel?

And now that the residents of "Palestine" have spoken at the ballot box, officially endorsing the cold-blooded murder of innocent men, women, and children, will the frog beaters finally stop hitting the frogs? Will they finally realize that they are making the problem worse?

I don't know. But I do know what the Torah tells us about the Egyptian frog beaters. Smart people doing goofy things led the world to see the greatness of G-d.

Someday, we will see the miracle of peace in the Middle East and the world. And when that happens, all of our enemies will recognize, as the Pharaoh eventually did, that "*... G-d is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the wicked ones.*" (9:27)

Let us all do something really smart. Let us all pray with all our hearts that that day will come soon.

Have a great Shabbos.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz